

*The Old Time Radio Club*

Established 1975

# THE ILLUSTRATED PRESS

Number 223



Our 20th Anniversary  
1975-1995

April 1995

A  
PUBLIX  
Theatre

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**All Records Being Smashed to Smithereens!**  
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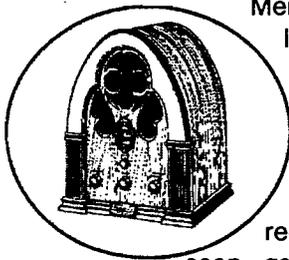
[1930]

**Membership Information**

New member processing, \$5.00 plus club membership of \$15.00 per year from Jan 1 to Dec 31.

Members receive a tape library listing, reference library listing, and a monthly newsletter.

Memberships are as follows: If you join Jan-Mar, \$15.00; Apr-Jun, \$12.00; Jul-Sep, \$8.00; Oct-Dec, \$5.00. All renewals should be sent in as



soon as possible to avoid missing

issues. Please be sure to notify us if you have a change of address. The **Old Time Radio Club** meets the first Monday of every month at 7:30 P.M. during the months of September to June at 393 George Urban Blvd. Cheektowaga, N.Y. 14225. The club meets informally during the months of July and August at the same address. Anyone interested in the Golden Age of Radio is welcome. The **Old Time Radio Club** is affiliated with The Old Time Radio Network.

**Club Mailing Address**

Old Time Radio Club  
P.O. Box 426  
Lancaster, N. Y. 14086

Back issues of *The Illustrated Press* are \$1.50 postpaid. Publications out of print may be borrowed from our Reference Library.

**Deadline for *The Illustrated Press* is the 1st of each month prior to publication.**

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## They Rode the Airwaves: Cowboys on Radio, part 5

by Dom Parisi

**Luke Slaughter of Tombstone** was on CBS radio. Luke rode into our homes for the first time on February 23, 1958. I don't know when he rode off into the setting sun.

The program starred Sam Buffington as Slaughter, a Civil War cavalryman turned cattleman. The story's opening went like this; "Across the territory, from Yuma to Fort Defiance, his name was respected or feared, depending on which side of the law you were on ... man of vision ... man of legend ... Luke Slaughter of Tombstone!"

Then Slaughter delivered his line; "Slaughter's my name, Luke Slaughter. Cattle's my business. It's a tough business; it's a big business. And there's no man west of the Rio Grande big enough to take it from me." (the same macho stuff that cowboys were made of)

The series was directed by the famous William N. Robson. Alas, like many other programs, Luke Slaughter came into the limelight at a date too late for radio.

### **Tales of the Texas Rangers**

and its cowboy star Joel McCrea came to radio on July 8, 1950 over NBC. Tales lasted two years; first on Saturday, then on Sunday. McCrea portrayed ranger Jase Pearson in "authentic re-enactments" of actual cases histories in the files of the Texas Rangers. He covered Texas with fifty men who made up the most famous and oldest law enforcement body in the United States. ( I wonder if the Lone Ranger was in this group at this time?)

The names, dates and places were fictitious "for obvious reasons." This program was a respectable, but minor part of NBC's lineup of programs.

Even though it had the support of many fine performers like Tony Barrett, Ed Begley, Herb Vigran, Peggy Webber and others, it just couldn't swing it. Stacy Keath produced and directed the series; Joel Murcott was the writer; and Hal Gibney was the announcer. If some of these names don't mean anything to you don't feel bad, many of the names of the

behind the scenes people don't ring bells for most people.

**Saunders of the Circle X.** All I can tell you about this program is that it was a corny western produced in San Francisco for airing on NBC's West Coast outlets. It premiered as a thirty minute Thursday night show on October 2, 1941 and told about the adventures (or misadventures) of "Singapore" Bill Saunders, foreman of the 90,000 acre Circle X Ranch.

John Cuthbertson was "Singapore," Bert Horton was Hank Pepper, the tireless story teller, Lou Tobin played ranch owner Thomas Mott, Bob Hudson was Pinto, the happy cowboy and Jack Kirkwood played foreman Joe Williams.

The show was written by Sam Dickson and scored with heavy western organ music.

**Tennessee Jed,** a daily fifteen minute Juvenile adventure serial program first aired on May 14, 1945 and ended its run in 1947. Jed was heard on the ABC network and was sponsored by Tip Top Bread and Tip Top Cakes.

The setting took place in the years just after the war between the states. It was the story of a marksman from the Old South, who had enough of the war and wanted to settle down in the wild frontier. Later Jed became an agent of the White House, working and reporting to President U.S. Grant. Jed was the marksman who could shot the eye out of a bug at 500 yards, and he did it every night in the shows opening lines:

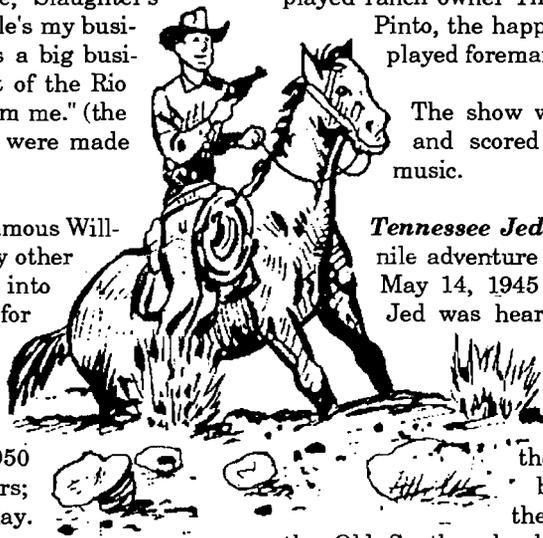
*There he goes, Tennessee! Get him!*

*(gunshot, ricochet)*

*Got him! Deeeaaad center!*

"Yes, it's Tennessee Jed, with his great horse Smoky and the two deadliest sixguns in all the West."

Jed could ricochet a bullet and still get his prey five times a week. The series was distinctive, scored by harmonica-accordion themes and bridges that suggested its southern origin.



Johnny Thomas played Jed in the early programs. The later shows featured Don MacLaughlin in the lead. Court Benson was the narrator-announcer for the program.

---continued next month---

**Famous Radio Couple, Amos 'n' Andy coming Sunday to the Shea's Bellevue in "Check and Double Check"**

from the Niagara Fall Gazette, November 7, 1930

Amos 'n' Andy famous radio stars, will be seen and heard in their first talking picture, "Check and Double Check," at the Shea's Bellevue beginning Sunday. They appear in blackface, as befits the characters which they impersonate, and their dialect is the same which has won them the favor of millions of radio fans. Irene Rich, Sue Carol, Charles Morton and Duke Ellington and his Cotton Club Orchestra are among others appearing in the picture. An appropriate surrounding program will be presented.

As delineators of Negro characterizations, Amos 'n' Andy have endeared themselves to millions of listeners. Their radio sketches, which are known for their true, honest characterizations of kindly and humorous Negro folks have established them in the hearts of old and young alike. Few but have heard their descriptions of the much involved affairs of the Fresh Air Taxicab Company "incorporated" or the doings of the mysterious "Kingfish" and "Madame Queen."

**Radio Industry**, November, 1940

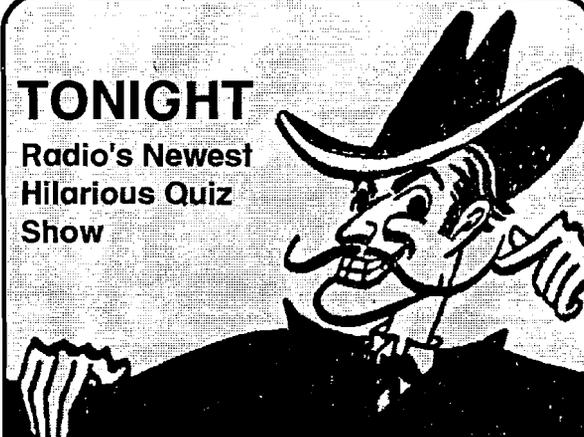
Manufactures of radio receivers .....	82
Manufactures of radio tubes .....	10
Manufactures of radio parts .....	.700
Manufactures of test equipment .....	49
Manufactures of broadcast and amateur equipment .....	95
Manufactures of sound equipment.....	106
Radio set and parts distributors .....	2,150
Manufactures' agents .....	301
Retail outlets selling radios.....	57,000
Servicemen, including dealers's servicemen....	25,000
Radio amateurs and experimenters.....	90,000
U.S. homes with radio.....	29,200,000
Secondary sets in above homes.....	12,200,000
Battery portables.....	1,400,000
Auto radios.....	7,200,000

Total radios in use..... 50,000,000

**What They Cost Per Pound**

Next time you meet the argument that radios cost too much, come back with a comparison of radios by weight, in contrast to other commodities.

Radios can be purchased for about \$1.50 a pound, at current prices. So get noisy about the fact that your "million dollar entertainers" are thus selling for prices similar to those paid for fine candy, or for books. The latter items may be a delight, but they're awfully temporary, compared with a five year ticket to the world's choicest events.



**TONIGHT**  
Radio's Newest  
Hilarious Quiz  
Show

**DUBONNET**  
*presents*  
**"STOP THAT VILLAIN"**  
*featuring*  
**THE MEANEST MAN IN RADIO**  
*and*  
**JOE REICHMAN** *The Pagliacci of the piano*

**WEBR 8:30 P.M.**

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## RADIO MEMORIES

by Francis Edward Bork

"I'm back in the saddle again, out where a friend is a friend, where the long horn cattle feed" --- the song sung by Gene Autry came blaring from my stereo unit. I had copied a Gene Autry album I borrowed from my buddy Ed Coons about a year ago. WOW, Gene Autry, it's great to hear Gene sing again. At that moment a thousand memories shot through my mind, taking me back to my childhood days and those great days of "Radio." Gene Autry on radio on Sunday nights, at the movies on Saturday at our local neighborhood theater, and even in the movie magazines my big sister always bought. How well I remember how our whole family would sit around our Zenith radio and listen to Gene's program broadcast from his Melody Ranch somewhere in Texas, or at least that what I thought and so did my pals, Butsey, Dirtyneck and even Ducky George and all the rest of the gang at school. But of course at that time there was no place as "Melody Ranch," only on the radio and in a couple of Gene movies that is.

Gene Autry was born in the year 1907 in Tyogu, Texas. His great-grandfather came west in a covered wagon from Tennessee. Gene was a true Westerner, the grandson of a Baptist Minister. He learned to sing in his grandfather's church at the ripe old age of six. Gene had like to sing and when he was ten years old he got a job at the local movie house passing out handbills of the upcoming movies and it was there that Gene saw all the movie cowboys chasing the outlaws across the Silver Screen. Reading all the dime novels he could get about the James Gang, Buffalo Bill and Wild Bill Hickok, he became an admirer of the American Cowboy image portrayed on the screen as crusading knights on horseback in the American west. Gene saved his money and at the age of twelve bought his first quarter horse from the Sears and Roebuck catalog. Gene worked hard learning to play the guitar and to sing all the western songs of the day. His first singing job (paid that is) was with The Field Brothers Marvelous Medicine Show singing to warm up the local crowd. Later he sang in the local cafe's for whatever the customers would toss into his hat.

In his own western countryside Gene saw in the year 1919 Oklahoma robber, Al Jennings caught by the local sheriff give up crime and pursue a new career, that of an actor, chasing real Indians as a cowboy hero, across the silver screen. Later that year Gene

moved to Sapula, Oklahoma where at the age of 17 he took a job as a ticket seller for the Frisco Line Railroad. It was there that Gene got his first experience with outlaws. He was held up and forced to give his ticket money to the outlaws. Although Gene was not hurt he was locked in a railway refrigerator car while the bandits rode away. Later Gene trained to be a telegraph operator and made good money at that trade working the graveyard shift.

In his late teens Gene got a job singing at a local radio station and was encouraged by a fellow Oklahoman by the name of Will Rogers, who admired Gene's singing and clean cut way of life. Gene became so popular that within three years he had his own radio show which was heard in Oklahoma and all its bordering states. His first song for Columbia Records was *That Silver Haired Daddy of Mine* and sold over a million copies and was the first record ever to be gold plated. Gene became known as the Oklahoma Yodeling Cowboy. He soon went to Chicago to be a regular performer on the then popular country radio show, *The National Barn Dance*. I do remember listening to the *National Barn Dance* on Saturday nights, for it was one of my mother's favorite radio shows. But try as I may, I can never remember Gene Autry singing on that program. My mother's favorites were Lulu Belle and Scotty, while I liked Ezra and Granpappy.

In 1933 Gene left radio for a short time to make movies, his first being *In Old Santa Fe* which starred Ken Maynard. Gene's first solo was a thirteen part serial called *The Phantom Empire* made in 1934 and was the first and only science fiction western, a classic for its type and day. Gene made 64 feature films for Republic Pictures which was called Mascot Pictures back in the early days of Hollywood. His first movie for Mascot was titled *Tumbling Tumbleweeds*, made in 1935. Gene was the first western star to be counted among the top ten Hollywood money makers. He remained in these ranks from 1937 until 1942 when he joined the Army Air Corps. Gene was the first Hollywood star to allow his name to be used in merchandising related products. He had as many as one-hundred items on the market at one time bearing his name. Another first for Gene came in 1950 when he became the first cowboy star to be named among the ten best dressed men in America.

In 1934 while traveling across America performing in his Road Show, his accordion player became sick with the flu. His replacement was a local man who could play almost any instrument in the book. His name, Smily Burnett, who soon would become Gene's

side kick, singing and acting next to Gene on his radio show. Together they would make more than sixty movies. All those who have worked with Gene agree that he is the most considerate and kindest man they had ever worked with. The All American Boy Type. Somewhere in time Gene bought a ranch in the San Fernando Valley and named it, yep, you guessed it, Melody Ranch. Gene enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1942. As Sgt. Gene Autry he did do some radio shows. After the war, Flight Officer Gene Autry returned to radio to do his *Melody Ranch Show* for Wrigley Spearmint Gum back on his old Sunday night radio slot. He then formed his own film company and made 46 feature films.

For many, many years his cowboy movies reigned supreme on the silver screen, with his simple formula that set the pace for a score of later westerns to be produced. Any Gene Autry fan can tell you that his pictures were always a pleasure to see. Smiley Burnett always provided a comedy spot to lighten the movies theme and of course Gene did a few of his great songs such as *South of the Border*, which in itself is a classic western song. A musical group called The Sons of The Pioneers supplied the musical background for many of Gene's songs. A young man appearing as a member of the Pioneers who later became known as The King of the Cowboys, was of course Roy Rogers. Gene helped Roy by many times giving him parts in his own films and even had Roy sing in a feature film.

Back in 1932 Gene married Ina Mae Spiney, the niece of his first song writing collaborator. Some of the songs Gene introduced were *Mexicali Rose* and *Here Comes Santa Claus* both of which have sold over one million copies. Who among us could forget Gene's rendition of *Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer*, which earned a platinum record after it sold well over two and a half million copies.

Back in the hey days of his movie popularity Gene Autry became a form of reward or punishment for me at our home. Do your home work, neatly now don't scribble, do your chores, take off your good clothes and put on your old ones before you go out to play, don't hit your sister, my mother would tell me, be-have or no Gene Autry movie on Saturday. It always worked. Don't hit your sister, why not she's bigger than me? Mom took all the fun away. If the threat of no Gene Autry movie didn't work, then came the most sinister and cruelest punishment of all, Francis how would you like a nice big glass of Ovaltine? Oh no, not that. I secretly vowed that I would die first before I ever would drink that awful stuff.

Gene began devoting most of his time to his investments in the early 1950's. He was chairman of the board of the Golden West Broadcasting Company which controlled radio station KVI in Seattle, KSFO in San Francisco and KMPC in Los Angeles. Among his other holdings are hotels, The Mark Hopkins on Nob Hill in San Francisco and the Continental Hotel on Hollywood's Sunset Strip. A twenty-five percent interest in a music publishing company, complete ownership in another music company, a fly school, a crop dusting service, several large ranches, several oil wells, The Gene Autry Champion Rodeo Shows, Gene Autry Television Productions, which produced such successful series as *Annie Oakley*, *Range Rider*, and *Buffalo Bill Jr.* and the Los Angeles Angels baseball team are other holding of Gene.

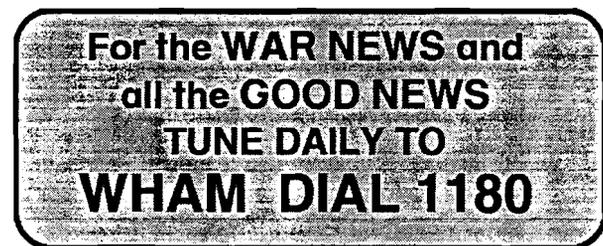
During his career Gene wrote and co-wrote well over 200 songs and sang more the 300 and sold over 50 million records. Today it is impossible to count the number of records, cassettes and CD's of Gene's songs that have been sold.

During World War II, Gene encouraged his radio listeners to buy U.S. War Bonds for the defense of our country and for the children to save their pennies and buy war stamps. Realizing the money that Gene had made for the movie studio he was offered a military deferment by the studio bosses, but Gene refused to be a slacker, (many other Hollywood stars did seek deferments and some got them) and enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps and after some time became a transport pilot serving in the Pacific area. After serving overseas Gene came home and worked the War Bond Tours and was back in the saddle again on radio, while still in the service.

Many years after World War II, Gene's dream came true, The Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum was built in Los Angeles.

Gene Autry, The All American Man.

Well that it for now, So long for now  
and Happy Radio Memories.



## Book Review

### The Lost Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Barns and Noble, Inc. by arrangement with Wieser and Wieser, Inc.

Do you want to find out how and when Sherlock Holmes met Professor Moriarty? Or why did Sherlock Holmes buy his Sussey Bee Farm? Then I suggest you read The Lost Adventures of Sherlock Holmes. The book is based on Denis Green's and Anthony Boucher's radio plays and written by Ken Greenwald, who grew up listening to radio in the 1940's. Needless to say his favorite radio show was *Sherlock Holmes* starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce. Greenwald turns thirteen radio shows into thirteen short stories by using as much of the original writings as possible. Keeping with the tradition of Dr. Watson being the story teller, the author did an excellent job of adding dialogue only where necessary. Any fan of old time radio or any Sherlock Holmes fan should find this book very interesting and highly entertaining.

Don Friedrich

### Member's Mike

Dear Editor,  
Just a short note to tell you how much I enjoy the *Illustrated Press*. Dom Parisi and Frank Bork are always enjoyable to read and I thoroughly enjoyed Tom Heathwood's article in the March IP on the evolution of logs. Keep up the good work.

Ray Olivieri  
West Seneca NY

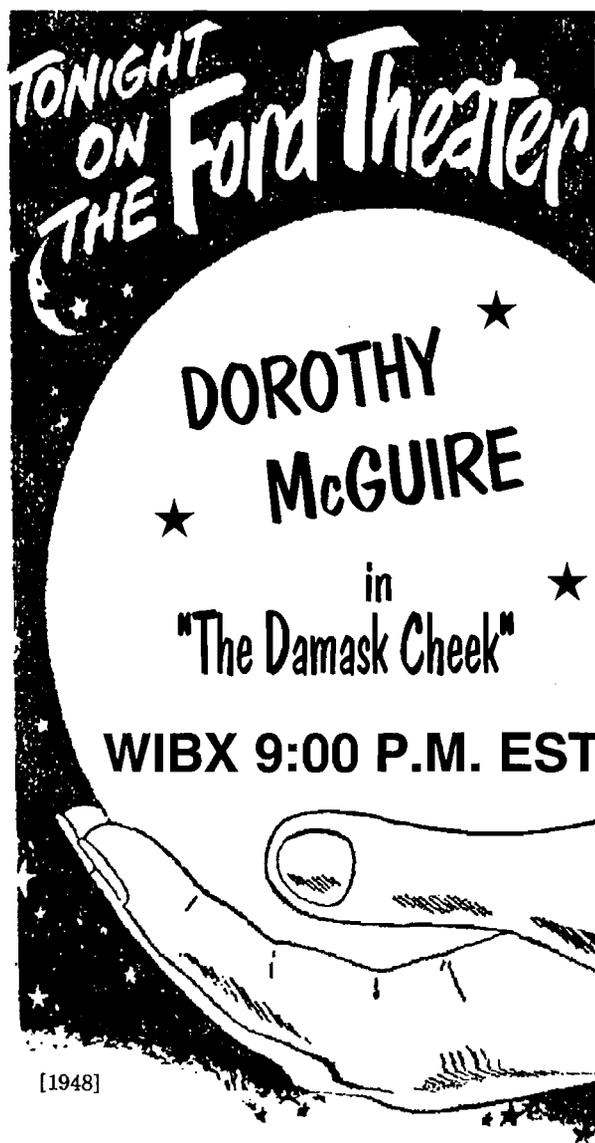
Dear Editor,  
I just received your latest issue of *The Illustrated Press* and wanted to compliment you on the issue. I am impressed by the publication, particularly when it is being put out monthly. Not an easy thing to maintain.

But I also want to comment on Jim Snyder's article in this (Jan. '95) issue. I first met Jim through the mail when he disagreed with me on a letter I had written to *The Illustrated Press* several years ago. Since that time we have become good friends and discovered that we agree more than we disagree. I

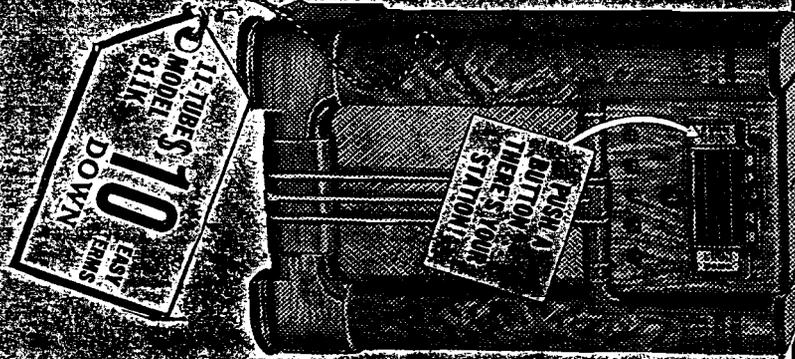
have always been impressed by his wide knowledge of OTR. He hasn't concentrated on certain shows, but seems to have a general knowledge of the entire field. He is also a very convincing speaker. He managed to talk me into writing a column for him, after I had avoided the chore for years!

Thanks again for your continuing efforts on behalf of the newsletter. I continue to look forward to future issues and another twenty years of your organization and Old Time Radio.

Jack Palmer  
Battle Creek, MI



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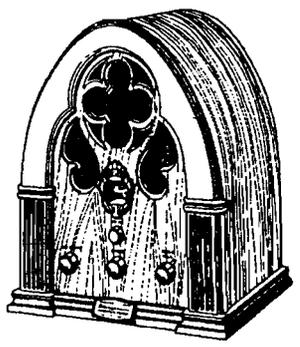
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